



Perspective for planning meetings with surrounding CHCs

County Historical Commissions (CHC) often gather to share information about ongoing projects and learn more about the history of a county or region. We commonly refer to these gatherings as CHC regional meetings. Several CHCs plan and host these educational opportunities throughout the year, and some regions host these meetings on an annual basis.

Recently, one of our more active CHCs tried to schedule a regional meeting but canceled plans when surrounding CHCs didn't respond with interest. While this outcome may be frustrating, these planning efforts are important and the individuals responsible should be commended. Regional meetings are the best way learn more about CHCs—the challenges faced and the solutions found.

Going forward, we wanted to share a few lessons learned over the years as we've planned regional meetings across Texas.

Consider the following when planning regional meetings.

Strategic planning is critical. The host CHC promoted the regional meeting to surrounding CHCs but established an early registration cut-off date. This approach enabled planners to gauge interest before developing presentations and expending funds to secure venues and food. Although canceling the meeting was disappointing, the decision prevented waste and saved time, energy, and money for future projects.

Common doesn't mean same. We assume that because CHCs share a mission, appointees have similar interests but this may not be the case. Some CHCs diversify and others specialize, which means the focus of each organization may differ. What interests you may or may not interest others, so consider polling surrounding counties to gauge interest in participation and subject matter prior to making final decisions about the meeting. When your neighbors have a portion in the planning, they are more likely to participate in implementation.

CHCs vary in activity levels. CHCs need to 6-12 months' notice to include supplemental activities to an ongoing workload. An overloaded CHC won't be able to add activities to its schedule; an apathetic CHC won't feel the need to attend activities outside its county. If either circumstance applies to CHCs in your

region, then even the best regional meeting topic and most accommodating meeting time won't influence participation. So, don't take disinterest personally; be proud for having made the effort!

Regional meetings are worth the effort. CHC interaction cultivates preservation in your region and across the state. Attending these meetings is one of the best ways for CHC appointees to learn and grow. Even if only a few CHCs attend, all participants will benefit when a constructive program is provided. Concentrate on quality over quantity. Start small and develop relationships that will strengthen over time and increase future attendance.

Additional CHC content on the Texas Historical Commission website

- Expanding CHC Partnerships
thc.texas.gov/expanding-chc-partnerships



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